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PRESS RELEASE

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JUSTICE DEPARTMENT SETTLES HOUSING DISCRIMINATION CASE IN WESTERN NEW YORK

The Justice Department today announced an agreement with the builder and architect of a townhouse development in Western New York to settle a lawsuit alleging violations of the federal Fair Housing Act.

The defendants, Thoreau Development of Western New York, Inc. and Alliance Construction of WNY, Inc., were responsible for the design and construction of a townhouse complex in Lancaster, New York. They have agreed to settle a lawsuit brought by the United States Attorney's Office in Buffalo in coordination with the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice by retrofitting condominium units to make them accessible to persons with disabilities and sponsoring a training session on the housing accessibility requirements for architects and builders throughout Western New York.

"The Justice Department remains deeply committed to ensuring that persons with disabilities enjoy access to housing," said R. Alexander Acosta, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "We appreciate the defendants' cooperation with the Justice Department in resolving this matter."

Michael A. Battle, the United States Attorney for the Western District of New York, hailed the settlement as an important step in ensuring that builders and developers in Western New York comply with the Fair Housing Act: "We commend the defendants for cooperating with the government in resolving this matter. We are hopeful that the training that will be provided to our local developers will assist them in building housing that is accessible to all our citizens."

The settlement, which must still be approved by a federal district judge, calls for the defendants to offer the owners of the three units covered by the accessibility requirements certain retrofits, including, among other things, removing steps, reconfiguring bathrooms to provide added maneuvering space, widening doorways, and installing reinforcements

in the walls at toilets and bathtubs to allow for the future installation of grab bars. In addition, the defendants agreed to pay \$1,000 in damages to the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans Association, which filed the complaint with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that led to the filing of the lawsuit by the Department of Justice.

Individuals who believe they may have been victims of housing discrimination may call the Justice Department's Housing and Civil Enforcement Section at 800-896-7743. Additional information is available on HUD's website at www.hud.gov and the Justice Department's website at www.usdoj.gov/crt/housing.

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